

*condition of participation, focusing on persuading individuals to voluntarily continue with treatment rather than on applying punitive measures to assure compliance.*

## **Key Characteristics of Jail Diversion Programs**

States and communities across the country are creating innovative and progressive programs uniquely suited to their local needs and resources. This diversity is crucial to the acceptance and effectiveness of jail diversion programs along the services continuum. Nevertheless, a number of key program characteristics are common to jail diversion programs. They include:

- Jail diversion programs are based on the fundamental principle that treatment must be provided in the least restrictive setting possible. Emphasis is placed on community-based treatment services that maximize individual choice and minimize civil or criminal legal constraints.
- Service integration at the community level is key, including partnerships among mental health, substance abuse, social services, justice and other agencies that are essential to developing a well-coordinated response;
- Regular contacts occur for sharing information, coordinating services and addressing problems;
- Experienced staff are responsible for bridging the gaps between mental health, substance abuse and criminal justice systems to ensure coordination of care;
- Strong and effective leadership creates and guides service development and delivery;
- Programs are committed to early identification of and intervention for individuals with mental health treatment needs who can be diverted into treatment.<sup>16</sup>